

Dover Bridge Named in Honor of Senior Airman Elizabeth Loncki

Today, Governor John Carney, Delaware Department of Transportation Secretary Jennifer Cohan, Delaware's congressional delegation, and military and veterans' leaders gathered at Dover Air Force Base to dedicate the bridge over Route 1, between DAFB and base housing, to Elizabeth Loncki, the first Delaware woman killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. This Sunday, October 14, would be Senior Airman Loncki's 35th birthday.

Senior Airman Loncki, 23, died on Jan. 7, 2007, after her explosive ordnance disposal team was targeted by a car bomber near Baghdad, Iraq. Loncki, a New Castle native, attended St. Peter the Apostle grade school and graduated from Padua Academy in Wilmington in 2001. She briefly attended the University of Arizona before enlisting in the Air Force.

"Today we are honoring Elizabeth Loncki-a Delaware hero who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving her country," **said Governor Carney**. "I am humbled by the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform who selflessly go into harm's way to protect us here and abroad. We are proud of all those who have served, and for the many sacrifices made by our active duty and reserve members, our veterans, and their families, in order to preserve our freedoms."

U.S. Sen. Tom Carper, a 23-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, said, "I am honored to be a part of the naming of this bridge for Senior Airman Elizabeth Loncki, who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our country. We owe our servicemen and women a debt of gratitude, and now the thousands of motorists who travel up and down Route 1 for work, school, and to reach

their vacation destinations will have the important reminder that they are free to do all of those things because of the sacrifice of service members like Elizabeth Loncki."

"Today is a wonderful opportunity to remember the ultimate sacrifice that Sr. Airman Elizabeth Loncki made for her country," **stated U.S. Sen. Chris Coons**. "The bridge will be a reminder to all who travel it of Liz's memory, her dedication to her profession, and her unconditional love of country and while today's dedication is a fitting tribute, there are other ways we can honor Liz's memory, such as answering the challenges our veterans face, ensuring they have the resources, the treatment, and the support they have earned and deserve including strengthening mental health and employment services."

"In January 2007, 23-year-old Senior Airman Elizabeth Loncki made the ultimate sacrifice for her brothers and sisters in arms, her family, and her country," **U.S. Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester said**. "This bridge is much more than just concrete and steel. It serves as a reminder of Elizabeth's bravery and willingness to answer a calling higher than herself. With the dedication of this memorial, her memory and spirit will live on."

Secretary of Transportation Jennifer Cohan added, "Elizabeth Loncki was a brave young woman who sacrificed her life in service to her country, and DelDOT is grateful to have the opportunity to name this bridge in her honor. Elizabeth's dedication to the greater good is something that we should all strive to emulate, and we hope that this bridge will serve as a lasting testimony to her values."

"We are honored to share in dedicating the bridge, which most of us use on a daily basis, to the honor and memory of Senior Airman Elizabeth Loncki," **said Colonel Joel Safranek, commander of the 436th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base**. "She made the ultimate sacrifice for her country, and it is

only fitting to have this memorial here at Dover where we return our fallen service members with dignity, honor and respect. I am grateful to be part of this and pleased to see the project come to completion.”

“Senior Airman Elizabeth Loncki was competitive, battling stereotypes to prove she belonged in a male dominated career (explosive ordinances),” **said Larence Kirby, executive director of the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs.** “She was brave beyond words, performing duties that few can envision. When she return from disarming explosives, we deployers thanked God for her safety and understood her efforts kept us safe. When we lost her to a violent enemy, we prayed for her soul internalizing the significance of her sacrifice, knowing she did so willingly in defense of our nation.”

Staff Sergeant Johny Hargove, who proposed the idea for naming the bridge for Elizabeth Loncki, remarked, “I would like to thank the Congressional Delegation, Governor Carney, Secretary Cohan, Mayor Christiansen and all of the Representatives for being here on this worthwhile occasion. It is certain that we all have one thing in common today and that is our admiration for Senior Airman Liz Loncki. I can’t think of a better way to be reminded of her sacrifice than to see her name memorialized on this bridge. Thank you to all who made this possible. It gives me great privilege to be on the team that brought this to fruition.”